

Emergency Contraception after Sexual Assault

Key Facts for Survivors

Emergency Contraception (EC) can help prevent pregnancy after sexual assault or rape.

- § Taking EC after a sexual assault can lower your chances of getting pregnant from the assault.
- § Take EC as soon as you can for it to work best.
- § EC is most effective when taken within the first 12 hours after sexual assault.
- § Most providers will give you EC up to 3 days (72 hours) after a sexual assault. Others will give it to you up to 5 days (120 hours) after.

What are Emergency Contraceptive pills?

EC pills contain the same medication as regular birth control pills. There are two types of EC pills which help to prevent pregnancy after a sexual assault:

- § Plan B™ progestin-only pills
 - § High doses of regular birth control pills
- Not all women may be able to take EC for medical reasons. Talk to the doctor to see if EC is right for you.

Medical research shows that EC is safe and effective.

- § EC pills have been used safely by millions of women for emergency birth control.
- § Plan B™ progestin-only pills reduce the risk of pregnancy by 89%.*
- § Other birth control pills taken for EC reduce the risk of pregnancy by 75%.*

** EC is not meant to be used as a regular birth control method. Other methods are more effective for regular, long-term pregnancy prevention.*

How do EC pills work?

EC pills work in different ways. They may:

- § Keep the egg from leaving the ovary
- § Keep the sperm from meeting the egg
- § Keep the fertilized egg from attaching to the uterus

Medical research shows EC prevents pregnancy:

- § If you find out later that you were pregnant when you took EC, it will not harm your body or your pregnancy.
- § EC will not affect your ability to become pregnant in the future.

What will happen after I take EC?

- § You may experience changes in the timing or flow of your next menstrual period. **If your period is more than 1 week late, you may be pregnant.**
- § You may experience non-serious side effects, such as nausea, abdominal pain, and dizziness, similar to the side effects of regular birth control pills.
- § **If you vomit within 2 hours of taking a dose, call the medical provider to see if the dose should be repeated.**
- § The doctor can answer any questions you may have about EC.

Where can I get EC after a sexual assault?

- § Most hospital emergency rooms.
- § Medical providers and family planning programs.
- § Some pharmacies in Massachusetts dispense EC. Call ahead and ask if your pharmacist can dispense EC.

Don't Wait: The sooner you take EC, the better it works to prevent pregnancy after sexual assault.

If EC was not provided to you at the hospital and you need more help to get EC, you can:

- § **Call Boston Area Rape Crisis Center** to speak with an advocate for help getting EC after a sexual assault: **1-800-841-8371 (English) or 1-800-223-5001 (Español)** or visit www.barcc.org, or
- § **Call 1-888-Not-2-Late (1-888-668-2528)** or visit www.not-2-late.com for help anytime you need EC.

To find low-cost family planning services such as EC, birth control and STD counseling and testing:

- § **Call 617-624-6060 or 1-877-414-4447**, or
- § **Visit <http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/famplan.htm>**